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ABSTRACT

This autobiography relates the early teaching experiences of Kentucky teacher and author Jesse Stuart (1906-1984). Barely 17 years old, he first taught in a one-room, isolated rural school in eastern Kentucky for $60 a month. His 35 barefoot students in the eight grades ranged in age from 5 to 20 years. The students' passion for learning reinforced his own love of teaching. When the 6-month term ended, Jesse spent the next 5 years finishing high school, working 1 year in a steel mill, and completing college (Lincoln Memorial University, Tennessee) in 3 years. He was hired as the only teacher of 14 pupils at "Winston" High School in "Greenland" County, Kentucky, for $100 a month. During the 8-month school term, he worked harder than the students in order to stay ahead of them. After borrowing money to do graduate work during the summer at Peabody College, he accepted the principalship of "Landsburgh" High School. At the end of the year he again borrowed money to work with the Fugitives (a writers' group) at Vanderbilt University. He went from there to Superintendent of "Greenwood" County schools where his work for reforms made him the target of local politicians. When his contract was not renewed because he was too controversial, he accepted the principalship of "Maxwell" High School where he stayed for 4 years. During this time, he continued to write and to speak at many colleges and universities. After returning from a leave of absence to study abroad, he took a position at a school in Ohio teaching remedial studies and published a local newspaper to publicize his often controversial viewpoints on the Kentucky trustee system, low teacher pay, unequal funding, teacher seniority rights, and the educational system in general. Physically threatened and mentally and emotionally exhausted, he quit teaching to raise sheep, to get married, and to continue to write. (SAS)

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